



LAHIRI'S SELECT POEMS

Revised Edition

080C.U.
350/2B

UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

1943



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PREFACE

“ Lahiri's Select Poems ” was originally compiled by three Head Masters in collaboration. Prompted by a desire to keep alive the memory of his parents, the late Mr. S. K. Lahiri made a gift of the copyright of the book to the University, on condition that out of its sale proceeds a gold medal might be awarded every year to the best scholar in Moral Philosophy at the B.A. Examination in memory of his father the late Babu Ramtanu Lahiri. Subsequently in 1911, the Syndicate resolved that out of the sale proceeds of the book two gold medals (Ramtanu Lahiri and Gangamani Debi Gold Medals) should be annually awarded to the best graduates (one male and one female) in Mental and Moral Philosophy at the B.A. Examination, in memory of the late Babu Ramtanu Lahiri and his wife Sreemati Gangamani Debi respectively. In 1914, the Syndicate, at the suggestion of the donor and with the sanction of the Senate, founded a Research Fellowship in Bengali Language and Literature, to be maintained out of the sale proceeds of the above-mentioned book, supplemented by grants from the Fee fund of the University. The Fellowship (raised to a Professorship in 1930) was named after the late Babu Ramtanu Lahiri, the father of the donor.



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LAHIRI'S SELECT POEMS

1

THE HAPPY LIFE

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill!

Whose passions not his masters are,
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Not tied unto the world with care
Of public fame or private breath;

Who envies none that chance doth raise
Nor vice; who never understood
How deepest wounds are given by praise;
Nor rules of state, but rules of good;

Who hath his life from rumours freed;
Whose conscience is his strong retreat;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed,
Nor ruin make accusers great;

Who God doth late and early pray
More of his grace than gifts to lend;
And entertains the harmless day
With a well-chosen book or friend;

—This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall;
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all.

2

TO DAFFODILS

FAIR daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.

Stay, stay
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.

We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

THE GIFTS OF GOD

WHEN God at first made Man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
Let us (said He) pour on him all we can:
Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie,
Contract into a span.

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure:
When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that, alone of all His treasure,
Rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should (said He)
Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness:
Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
May toss him to My breast.

DEATH THE LEVELLER

THE glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings:

Sceptre and crown
 Must tumble down,
 And in the dust be equal made
 With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
 And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
 But their strong nerves at last must yield;
 They tame but one another still:
 Early or late
 They stoop to fate,
 And must give up their murmuring breath
 When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow;
 Then boast no more your mighty deeds
 Upon Death's purple altar now
 See where the victor-victim bleeds.
 Your heads must come
 To the cold tomb;
 Only the actions of the just
 Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

5

THE POPLAR-FIELD

THE poplars are fell'd;—farewell to the shade,
 And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade!
 The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
 Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

Twelve years have elaps'd since I first took a view
 Of my favourite field and the bank where they grew,
 And now in the grass behold they are laid,
 And the tree is my seat that once lent me a shade.



LAUGHING SONG

5

The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charm'd me before
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.

6

LAUGHING SONG

WHEN the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene,
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha, Ha, He!"

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha, Ha, He!"

LUCY

I

STRANGE fits of passion have I known :
And I will dare to tell,
But in the lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved look'd every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening moon.

Upon the moon I fix'd my eye,
All over the wide lea ;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reach'd the orchard-plot ;
And, as we climb'd the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon !
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on ; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopp'd :
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropp'd.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
 Into a lover's head!
 'O mercy!' to myself I cried,
 'If Lucy should be dead!'

II

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
 Beside the springs of Dove,
 A Maid whom there were none to praise
 And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
 Half hidden from the eye!
 Fair as a star, when only one
 Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
 When Lucy ceased to be;
 But she is in her grave, and oh,
 The difference to me!

III

I TRAVELL'D among unknown men,
 In lands beyond the sea;
 Nor, England! did I know till then
 What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
 Nor will I quit thy shore
 A second time; for still I seem
 To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
 The joy of my desire;
 And she I cherish'd turn'd her wheel
 Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings show'd, thy nights conceal'd,
 The bowers where Lucy play'd;
 And thine too is the last green field
 That Lucy's eyes survey'd.

IV

THREE years she grew in sun and shower;
 Then Nature said, 'A lovelier flower
 On earth was never sown;
 This child I to myself will take;
 She shall be mine, and I will make
 A lady of my own.

' Myself will to my darling be
 Both law and impulse: and with me
 The girl, in rock and plain,
 In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
 Shall feel an overseeing power
 To kindle or restrain.

' She shall be sportive as the fawn
 That wild with glee across the lawn
 Or up the mountain springs;
 And hers shall be the breathing balm,
 And hers the silence and the calm
 Of mute insensate things.

' The floating clouds their state shall lend
 To her; for her the willow bend;
 Nor shall she fail to see
 Even in the motions of the storm
 Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
 By silent sympathy.

The stars of midnight shall be dear
 To her; and she shall lean her ear
 In many a secret place
 Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
 And beauty born of murmuring sound
 Shall pass into her face.

And vital feelings of delight
 Shall rear her form to stately height,
 Her virgin bosom swell;
 Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
 While she and I together live
 Here in this happy dell.'

Thus Nature spake.—The work was done—
 How soon my Lucy's race was run!
 She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be.

V

A SLUMBER did my spirit seal;
 I had no human fears:
 She seem'd a thing that could not feel
 The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
 She neither hears nor sees;
 Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course,
 With rocks, and stones, and trees.

HOHENLINDEN

On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow,
And dark as winter was the flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden saw another sight,
When the drum beat at dead of night,
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.

By torch and trumpet fast array'd,
Each horseman drew his battle-blade,
And furious every charger neigh'd,
To join the dreadful revelry.

Then shook the hills with thunder riven,
Then rush'd the steed to battle driven,
And louder than the bolts of heaven,
Far flash'd the red artillery.

But redder yet that light shall glow
On Linden's hills of stained snow,
And bloodier yet the torrent flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

'Tis morn, but scarce yon level sun
Can pierce the war-clouds' rolling dun,
Where furious Frank and fiery Hun
Shout in their sulph'rous canopy.

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,
Who rush to glory, or the grave!
Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave,
And charge with all thy chivalry!

Come, months, come away;
 Put on white, black, and grey;
 Let your light sisters play—
 Ye, follow the bier
 Of the dead cold year,
 And make her grave green with tear on tear.

10

FAERY SONG

SHED no tear—oh shed no tear!
 The flower will bloom another year.
 Weep no more—oh weep no more!
 Young buds sleep in the root's white core.
 Dry your eyes—oh dry your eyes,
 For I was taught in Paradise
 To ease my breast of melodies—
 Shed no tear

Overhead—look overhead
 Mong the blossoms white and red—
 Look up, look up—I flutter now
 On this flush pomegranate bough.
 See me—'tis this silvery bill
 Ever cures the good man's ill.

Shed no tear—oh shed no tear!
 The flower will bloom another year.
 Adieu, Adieu! I fly, adieu!
 I vanish in the heaven's blue—
 Adieu, Adieu!

DREAM-PEDLARY

If there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell;
Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die.
Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
This would I buy.

" HOME THEY BROUGHT HER WARRIOR
DEAD "

HOME they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:
All her maidens, watching, said,
' She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
 Call'd him worthy to be loved,
 Truest friend and noblest foe;
 Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
 Lightly to the warrior stept,
 Took the face-cloth from the face;
 Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
 Set his child upon her knee—
 Like summer tempest came her tears—
 ' Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

13

" WILL YOU WALK A LITTLE FASTER?"

" WILL you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to
 a snail,
 " There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's tread-
 ing on my tail.
 See how eagerly the lobsters, and the turtles all
 advance!
 They are waiting on the shingle—will you come and
 join the dance?
 Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you
 join the dance?
 Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you
 join the dance?"

“ You can really have no notion how delightful it
will be,
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters,
out to sea !”
But the snail replied, “ Too far, too far !” and gave
a look askance—
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would
not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would
not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, would
not join the dance.

“ What matters it how far we go ?” his scaly friend
replied.
“ There is another shore, you know, upon the other
side,
The further off from England the nearer is to France—
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join
the dance.
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you
join the dance ?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you
join the dance ?”

THE BURIAL OF SIR JOHN MOORE AT
CORUNNA

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning,
{ By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
And the lanthorn dimly burning. }

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.

Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow, =>

We thought, as we hollowed his narrow bed
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head
And we far away on the billow!

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him—
One little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our heavy task was done
When the clock struck the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
But we left him alone with his glory.

THE BUILDING OF THE SHIP

" BUILD me straight, O worthy Master!
 Staunch and strong a goodly vessel,
 That shall laugh at all disaster,
 And with wave and whirlwind wrestle! "

The merchant's word
 Delighted the Master heard;
 For his heart was in his work, and the heart
 Giveth grace unto every Art.

A quiet smile played round his lips,
 As the eddies and dimples of the tide
 Play round the bows of ships
 That steadily at anchor ride.
 And with a voice that was full of glee,
 He answered, " Ere long we will launch
 A vessel as goodly, and strong, and staunch,
 As ever weathered a wintry sea! "

And first with nicest skill and art,
 Perfect and finished in every part,
 A little model the Master wrought,
 Which should be to the larger plan
 What the child is to the man,
 Its counterpart in miniature;
 That with a hand more swift and sure
 The greater labour might be brought
 To answer to his inward thought.

And as he laboured, his mind ran o'er
 The various ships that were built of yore,

And above them all, and strangest of all,
Towered the Great Harry, crank and tall,
Whose picture was hanging on the wall,
With bows and stern raised high in air,
And balconies hanging here and there,
And signal lanterns and flags afloat,
And eight round towers, like those that frown
From some old castle, looking down
Upon the drawbridge and the moat.
And he said with a smile, "Our ship, I wis,
Shall be of another form than this!"
It was of another form, indeed;
Built for freight, and yet for speed,
A beautiful and gallant craft;
Broad in the beam, that the stress of the blast,
Pressing down upon sail and mast,
Might not the sharp bows overwhelm;
Broad in the beam, but sloping aft
With graceful curve and slow degrees,
That she might be docile to the helm,
And that the currents of parted seas,
Closing behind, with mighty force,
Might aid and not impede her course.

In the ship-yard stood the Master,
With the model of the vessel,
That should laugh at all disaster,
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle!

Covering many a rood of ground,
Lay the timber piled around;
Timber of chestnut, and elm, and oak,
And scattered here and there, with these,
The knarred and crooked cedar knees;
Brought from regions far away.
Ah! what a wondrous thing it is

To note how many wheels of toil
One thought one word, can set in motion!
There's not a ship that sails the ocean,
But every climate, every soil,
Must bring its tribute, great or small,
And help to build the wooden wall!

The sun was rising o'er the sea,
And long the level shadows lay,
As if they, too, the beams would be
Of some great, airy argosy,
Framed and launched in a single day.

That silent architect, the sun,
Had hewn and laid them every one,
Ere the work of man was yet begun.
Beside the Master, when he spoke,
A youth, against an anchor leaning,
Listened, to catch his slightest meaning.
Only the long waves, as they broke
In ripples on the pebbly beach,
Interrupted the old man's speech.

Beautiful they were, in sooth,
The old man and the fiery youth!
The old man, in whose busy brain
Many a ship that sailed the main
Was modelled o'er and o'er again;
The fiery youth, who was to be
The heir of his dexterity,
The heir of his house, and his daughter's hand,
When he had built and launched from land
What the elder head had planned.

" Thus," said he, " will we build this ship!
Lay square the blocks upon the slip,
And follow well this plan of mine.
Choose the timbers with greatest care;
Of all that is unsound beware;
For only what is sound and strong
To this vessel shall belong.
Cedar of Maine and Georgia pine
Here together shall combine.

A goodly frame, and a goodly fame,
And the Union be her name!
For the day that gives her to the sea
Shall give my daughter unto thee!"

The Master's word
Enraptured the young man heard;
And as he turned his face aside,
With a look of joy and a thrill of pride,
Standing before
Her father's door,
He saw the form of his promised bride.
The sun shone on her golden hair,
And her cheek was glowing fresh and fair
With the breath of morn and the soft sea air.

Like a beauteous barge was she,
Still at rest on the sandy beach,
Just beyond the billow's reach.
Ah, how skilful grows the hand
That obeyeth Love's command!
It is the heart, and not the brain,
That to the highest doth attain,
And he who followeth Love's behest
Far excelleth all the rest!

Thus with the rising of the sun
Was the noble task begun,
And soon throughout the ship-yard's bounds
Were heard the intermingled sounds
Of axes and of mallets, plied
With vigorous arms on every side;
Plied so deftly and so well
That, ere the shadows of evening fell,
The keel of oak for a noble ship,
Scarfed and bolted, straight and strong,
Was lying ready, and stretched along
The blocks, well placed upon the slip.
Happy, thrice happy, every one
Who sees his labour well begun,
And not perplexed and multiplied
By idly waiting for time and tide!
And when the hot, long day was o'er,
The young man at the Master's door
Sat with the maiden calm and still,
And within the porch, a little more
Removed beyond the evening chill,
The father sat, and told them tales
Of wrecks in the great September gales,
Of pirates coasting the Spanish Main,
And ships that never came back again,
The chance and change of a sailor's life,
Want and plenty, rest and strife,
His roving fancy, like the wind,
That nothing can stay, and nothing can bind,
And the magic charm of foreign lands,
With shadows of palms, and shining sands,
Where the tumbling surf,
O'er the coral reefs of Madagascar,
Washes the feet of the swarthy Lascar,
As he lies alone and asleep on the turf.

And the trembling maiden held her breath
At the tales of that awful, pitiless sea,
With all its terror and mystery,
The dim, dark sea, so like unto Death,
That divides and yet unites mankind!
And whenever the old man paused, a gleam
From the bowl of his pipe would awhile illumine
The silent group in the twilight gloom,
And thoughtful faces, as in a dream. . . .

Day by day the vessel grew,
With timbers fashioned strong and true,
Till, framed with perfect symmetry,
A skeleton ship rose up to view!
And around the bows and along the side
The heavy hammers and mallets plied,
Till after many a week, at length,
Wonderful for form and strength,
Sublime in its enormous bulk,
Loomed aloft the shadowy hulk!
And around it columns of smoke, up-wreathing,
Rose from the boiling, bubbling, seething
Caldron, that glowed,
And overflowed
With the black tar, heated for the sheathing.

" And amid the clamours
Of clattering hammers,
He who listened heard now and then
The song of the Master and his men:—
" Build me straight, O worthy Master,
Staunch and strong, a goodly vessel,
That shall laugh at all disaster
And with wave and whirlwind wrestle! "

With oaken brace and copper band,
Lay the rudder on the sand,
That, like a thought, should have control
Over the movement of the whole;
And near it the anchor, whose giant hand
Would reach down and grapple with the land,
And immovable and fast
Hold the great ship against the bellowing blast!
And at the bows an image stood,
By a cunning artist carved in wood,
With robes of white, that far behind
Seemed to be fluttering in the wind.
It was not shaped in a classic mould,
Not like a Nymph or Goddess of old,
Or Naiad rising from the water,
But modelled from the Master's daughter!
On many a dreary and misty night,
'Twill be seen by the rays of the signal light,
Speeding along through the rain and the dark,
Like a ghost in its snow-white sark,
The pilot of some phantom bark,
Guiding the vessel, in its flight,
By a path none other knows aright!
Behold, at last,
Each tall and tapering mast
Is swang into its place;
Shrouds and stays
Holding it firm and fast!

Long ago,
In the deer-haunted forests of Maine,
When upon mountain and plain
Lay the snow,
They fell,—those lordly pines!
Those grand, majestic pines!

'Mid shouts and cheers
The jaded steers,
Panting beneath the goad,
Dragged down the weary, winding road,
Those captive kings so straight and tall,
To be shorn of their streaming hair,
And, naked and bare,
To feel the stress and the strain
Of the wind and the reeling main,
Whose roar
Would remind them for evermore
Of their native forests they should not see again.

And everywhere
The slender, graceful spars
Poise aloft in the air,
And at the mast-head,
White, blue, and red,
A flag unrolls the stripes and stars.
Ah! when the wanderer, lonely, friendless,
In foreign harbours shall behold
That flag unrolled,
'Twill be as a friendly hand
Stretched out from his native land,
Filling his heart with memories sweet and endless!

All is finished! and at length
Has come the bridal day
Of beauty and of strength.
To-day the vessel shall be launched!
With fleecy clouds the sky is blanched,
And o'er the bay,
Slowly, in all his splendours dight,
The great sun rises to behold the sight.

There she stands,
With her foot upon the sands,
Decked with flags and streamers gay,
In honour of her marriage day,
Her snow-white signals fluttering, blending,
Round her like a veil descending,
Ready to be
The bride of the gray old sea.

On the deck, another bride
Is standing by her lover's side.
Shadows from the flags and shrouds,
Like the shadows cast by clouds,
Broken by many a sunny fleck,
Fall around them on the deck.

The prayer is said,
The service read,
The joyous bridegroom bows his head;
And in tears the good old Master
Shakes the brown hand of his son,
Kisses his daughter's glowing cheek
In silence, for he cannot speak,
And ever faster
Down his own the tears begin to run.
The worthy pastor—
The shepherd of that wandering flock,
That has the ocean for its wold,
That has the vessel for its fold,
Leaping ever from rock to rock—
Spake, with accents mild and clear,
Words of warning, words of cheer,
But tedious to the bridegroom's ear.
He knew the char:
Of the sailor's heart,

All its pleasures and its griefs,
All its shallows and rocky reefs,
All those secret currents, that flow
With such resistless undertow,
And lift and drift, with terrible force,
The will from its moorings and its course.
Therefore he spake, and thus said he:—
“ Like unto ships far off at sea,
Outward or homeward bound, are we.
Before, behind, and all around,
Floats and swings the horizon's bound,
Seems at its distant rim to rise
And climb the crystal wall of the skies,
And then again to turn and sink,
As if we could slide from its outer brink.
Ah! it is not the sea,
It is not the sea that sinks and shelves,
But ourselves
That rock and rise
With endless and uneasy motion,
Now touching the very skies,
Now sinking into the depths of ocean.
Ah! if our souls but poise and swing
Like the compass in its brazen ring,
Ever level and over true
To the toil and the task we have to do,
We shall sail securely, and safely reach
The Fortunate Isles, on whose shining beach
The sights we see, and the sounds we hear,
Will be those of joy and not of fear!”

Then the Master,
With a gesture of command,
Waved his hand;

And at the word,
Loud and sudden there was heard,
All round them and below,
The sound of hammers, blow on blow,
Knocking away the shores and spurs.
And see! she stirs!
She starts,—she moves, she seems to feel
The thrill of life along her keel,
And, spurning with her foot the ground,
With one exulting, joyous bound,
She leaps into the ocean's arms!

Sail forth into the sea, O ship!
Through wind and wave, right inward steer!
The moistened eye, the trembling lip,
Are not the signs of doubt or fear.
Sail forth into the sea of life,
O gentle, loving, trusting wife,
And safe from all adversity
Upon the bosom of that sea
Thy comings and thy goings be!
For gentleness and love and trust
Prevail o'er angry wave and gust;
And in the wreck of noble lives
Something immortal still survives!

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!
We know what Master laid thy keel,
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,

Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what a forge and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!
Fear not each sudden sound and shock,
'Tis of the wave and not the rock;
'Tis but the flapping of the sail,
And not a rent made by the gale!
In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
In spite of false lights on the shore,
Sail on, nor fear to breast the sea!
Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
Are all with thee,—are all with thee!

16

CONTENTMENT

"Man wants but little here below"

LITTLE I ask; my wants are few;
I only wish a hut of stone,
(A *very plain* brown stone will do,)—
That I may call my own;—
And close at hand is such a one,
In yonder street that fronts the sun.

Plain food is quite enough for me;
Three courses are as good as ten;—
If Nature can subsist on three,
Thank Heaven for three. Amen!
I always thought cold victual nice;—
My *choice* would be vanilla-ice.

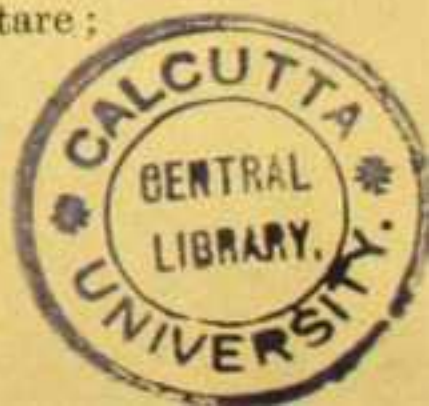
I care not much for gold or land;—
 Give me a mortgage here and there,—
 Some good bank-stock, some note of hand,
 Or trifling railroad share,—
 I only ask that Fortune send
 A *little* more than I shall spend.

Honours are silly toys, I know,
 And titles are but empty names;
 I would, *perhaps*, be Plenipo,—
 But only near St. James;
 I'm very sure I should not care
 To fill our Gubernator's chair.

Jewels are baubles; 'tis a sin
 To care for such unfruitful things;—
 One good-sized diamond in a pin,—
 Some, *not so large*, in rings,—
 A ruby, and a pearl, or so,
 Will do for me;—I laugh at show.

My dame should dress in cheap attire;
 (Good heavy silks are never dear;)
 I own perhaps I *might* desire
 Some shawls of true Cashmere,—
 Some marrowy crapes of China silk,
 Like wrinkled skins on scalded milk.

I would not have the horse I drive
 So fast that folks must stop and stare;
 An easy gait—two forty-five—
 Suits me; I do not care;—
 Perhaps, for just a *single spurt*,
 Some seconds less would do no hurt.



Of pictures, I should like to own
Titians and Raphaels three or four,—
I love so much their style and tone,—
One Turner, and no more,
(A landscape,—foreground golden dirt,—
The sunshine painted with a squirt).

Of books but few,—some fifty score
For daily use, and bound for wear;
The rest upon an upper floor;—
Some *little* luxury *there*
Of red morocco's gilded gleam,
And vellum rich as country cream.

Busts, cameos, gems,—such things as these,
Which others often show for pride,
I value for their power to please,
And selfish churls deride;
One Stradivarius, I confess,
Two meerschaums, I would fain possess.

Wealth's wasteful tricks I will not learn,
Nor ape the glittering upstart fool;—
Shall not carved tables serve my turn,
But *all* must be of buhl?
Give grasping pomp its double share,—
I ask but *one* recumbent chair.

Thus humble let me live and die.
Nor long for Midas' golden touch;
If Heaven more generous gifts deny,
I *shall* not miss them much,—
Too grateful for the blessing lent
Of simple tastes and mind content!

MY FAMILIAR

AGAIN I hear that creaking step!—
 He's rapping at the door!—
 Too well I know the boding sound
 That ushers in a bore.
 I do not tremble when I meet
 The stoutest of my foes,
 But Heaven defend me from the friend
 Who comes—but never goes!

He drops into my easy chair,
 And asks about the news,
 He peers into my manuscript,
 And gives his candid views;
 He tells me where he likes the line,
 And where he's forced to grieve;
 He takes the strangest liberties,—
 But never takes his leave!

He reads my daily paper through
 Before I've seen a word;
 He scans the lyric (that I wrote),
 And thinks it quite absurd;
 He calmly smokes my last cigar,
 And coolly asks for more;
 He opens everything he sees—
 Except the entry door!

He talks about his fragile health,
 And tells me of the pains
 He suffers from a score of ills
 Of which he ne'er complains;

And how he struggled once with Death
To keep the fiend at bay;
On themes like those away he goes—
But never goes away!

He tells me of the carping words
Some shallow critic wrote;
And every precious paragraph
Familiarly can quote;
He thinks the writer did me wrong;
He'd like to run him through!
He says a thousand pleasant things—
But never says, "Adieu!"

Whene'er he comes—that dreadful man—
Disguise it as I may,
I know that, like an autumn rain,
He'll last throughout the day.
In vain I speak of urgent tasks;
In vain I scowl and pout;
A frown is no extinguisher—
It does not put him out!

I mean to take the knocker off,
Put crape upon the door,
Or hint to John that I am gone
To stay a month or more.
I do not tremble when I meet
The stoutest of my foes,
But Heaven defend me from the friend,
Who never, never goes!

LITTLE JESUS

LITTLE Jesus, wast Thou shy
Once, and just so small as I?
And what did it feel like to be
Out of Heaven, and just like me?
Didst Thou sometimes think of *there*,
And ask where all the angels were?
I should think that I would cry
For my house all made of sky;
I would look about the air,
And wonder where my angels were,
And at waking 'twould distress me—
Not an angel there to dress me!
Hadst Thou ever any toys,
Like us little girls and boys?
And didst Thou play in Heaven with all
The angels that were not too tall,
With stars for marbles? Did the things
Play *Can you see me?* through their wings?
And did Thy Mother let Thee spoil
Thy robes, with playing on *our* soil?
How nice to have them always new
In Heaven, because 'twas quite clean blue!

Didst Thou kneel at night to pray,
And didst Thou join Thy hands, this way?
And did they tire sometimes, being young,
And make the prayer seem very long?
And dost Thou like it best, that we
Should join our hands to pray to Thee!
I used to think, before I knew,
The prayer not said unless we do.

And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And did Thy Mother at the night
Kiss Thee, and fold the clothes in right?
And didst Thou feel quite good in bed,
Kissed, and sweet, and Thy prayers said?

Thou canst not have forgotten all
That it feels like to be small:
And Thou know'st I cannot pray
To Thee in my father's way—
When Thou wast so little, say,
Couldst Thou talk Thy Father's way?—
So, a little Child, come down
And hear a child's tongue like Thy own;
Take me by the hand and walk,
And listen to my baby-talk.
To Thy Father show my prayer
(He will look, Thou art so fair.)
And say: 'O Father, I, Thy Son,
Bring the prayer of a little one.'

And He will smile, that children's tongue
Has not changed since 'Thou wast young!

ON THE OTHER SIDE

WHAT will you do through the waiting days,
What will my darling do?
Will you sleep, or wander in those strange ways
Until I can come to you?

Do you cry at the door as I cry here,
 Death's door that lies between?
Do you plead in vain for my love, my dear,
 As you stand by my side unseen?
Who will comfort your difficult ways
 That were hard to understand,
When I who knew you through all your days,
 Can give you no helping hand?
When I who loved you no word can speak,
 Though your ghost should cry to me,
Can give no help, though my heart should break
 At the thought of your agony.
You were shy of strangers—and who will come
 As you stand there lone and new,
Through the long years when my lips are dumb
 What will my darling do?

20

LEISURE

WHAT is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare?
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

21

OFF THE GROUND

THREE jolly Farmers
Once bet a pound
Each dance the others would
Off the ground.
Out of their coats
They slipped right soon,
And neat and nicesome
Put each his shoon.
One—Two—Three!—
And away they go,
Not too fast,
And not too slow;
Out from the elm-tree's
Noonday shadow,
Into the sun
And across the meadow.
Past the schoolroom,
With knees well bent
Fingers a-flicking,
They dancing went.
Up sides and over,
And round and round,
They crossed click-clacking,
The Parish bound,

By Tupman's meadow
They did their mile,
Tee-to-tum
On a three-barred stile.
Then straight through Whipham,
Downhill to Week,
Footing it lightsome,
But not too quick,
Up fields to Watchet,
And on through Wye,
Till seven fine churches
They'd seen skip by—
Seven fine churches,
And five old mills,
Farms in the valley,
And sheep on the hills;
Old Man's Acre
And Dead Man's Pool
All left behind,
As they danced through Wool,
And Wool gone by,
Like tops that seem
To spin in sleep
They danced in dream:
Withy—Wellover—
Wassop—Wo—
Like an old clock
Their heels did go.
•A league and a league
And a league they went,
And not one weary,
And not one spent.

And lo, and behold!
Past Willow-cum-Leigh
Stretched with its waters
The great green sea.
Says Farmer Bates,
‘ I puffs and I blows,
What’s under the water,
Why, no man knows!’
Says Farmer Giles,
‘ My wind comes weak,
And a good man drowned
Is far to seek.’
But Farmer Turvey,
On twirling toes
Up’s with his gaiters,
And in he goes:
Down where the mermaids
Pluck and play
On their twangling harps
In a sea-green day;
Down where the mermaids,
Finned and fair,
Sleek with their combs
Their yellow hair.
Bates and Giles—
On the shingle sat,
Gazing at Turvey’s
Floating hat.
But néver a ripple
Nor bubble told
Where he was supping
Off plates of gold.



Never an echo
 Rilled through the sea
 Of the feasting and dancing
 And minstrelsy.
 They called—called—called:
 Came no reply:
 Nought but the ripples'
 Sandy sigh.
 Then glum and silent
 They sat instead,
 Vacantly brooding
 On home and bed,
 Till both together
 Stood up and said:—
 ' Us knows not, dreams not,
 Where you be,
 Turvey, unless
 In the deep blue sea;
 But axcusing silver—
 And it comes most willing—
 Here's us two paying
 Our forty shilling;
 For it's sartin sure, Turvey,
 Safe and sound,
 You danced us square, Turvey,
 Off the ground! '

TIME, YOU OLD GIPSY MAN

TIME, you old gipsy man,
 Will you not stay,
 Put up your caravan
 Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,
Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing,
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may,
Time, you old gipsy,
Why hasten away?

Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,
Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein—
Only a moment,
And off once again;
Off to some city
Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Just as my watch was done the fog had lifted,
And we could see the flashing of our light,
And see once more the reef beyond the Head
Over which six days and nights the mist had drifted,
Until it seemed all time to mist had drifted
And day and night were but one blind white night.

But on the seventh midnight the wind shifted
And I was glad to tumble into bed,
Thankful to hear no more the blaring horn
That ceaselessly had sounded night and morn
With moaning echoes through the mist to warn
The blind bewildered ships at sea:
Yet, though as tired as any dog,
I lay awhile and seemed to feel
Fog lying on my eyes still heavily,
And still the horn unceasingly
Sang through my head, till gradually
Through night's strange stillness over me
Sweet sleep began to steal,
Sleep blind and thick and fleecy as the fog.

For all I knew, I might have slept
A moment—or eternity,
When, startled by a crash,
I waked to find I'd leapt
Upright on the floor;
And stood there listening to the smash
Of falling glass...and then a thud
Of something heavy tumbling
Into the next room...
A pad of naked feet...

A moan...a sound of stumbling...
A heavier thud...and then no more.
And I stood shivering in the gloom,
With creeping flesh and tingling blood,
Until I gave myself a shake
To bring my wits more wide awake,
And lit a lanthorn and flung wide the door.
Half-dazed and dazzled by the light,
At first it seemed I'd only find
A broken pane, a flapping blind;
But when I raised the lanthorn o'er my head
I saw a naked boy upon the bed
Who crouched and shuddered on the folded sheet.
And on his face before my feet
A naked man who lay as if quite dead,
Though on his broken knuckles blood was red;
And all my wits awakened at the sight.
I set the lanthorn down and took the child,
Who looked at me with piteous eyes and wild,
And chafed his chill wet body till it glowed,
And, forcing spirit 'twixt his chattering teeth,
I tucked him snugly in beneath
The blankets and soon left him warmly stowed;
And stooped to tend the man who lay
Still senseless on the floor.
I turned him off his face
And laid him on the other bed,
And washed and staunched his wound;
And yet, for all that I could do,
I could not bring him to,
Or see a trace
Of life returning to that heavy head.

It seemed he'd swooned
When through the window he'd made way,



Just having strength to lay
The boy in safety. Still as death
He lay without a breath;
And, seeing I could do no more
To help him in the fight for life,
I turned again to tend the lad,
And as I looked on him was glad
To find him sleeping quietly.
So, fetching fuel, I lit a fire
And quickly had as big a blaze
As any housewife could desire:
Then 'twixt the beds I set a chair,
That I might watch until they stirred:
And as I saw them lying there—
The sleeping boy and him who lay
In that strange stiller sleep, 'twas plain
That they were son and father, now
I'd time to look and wonder how
In such a desperate plight,
Without a stitch or rag,
They'd taken refuge from the night.
And, as I wondered drowsily,
It seemed still queerer and more queer:
For round the Head the rocks are sheer
With scarce a foothold for a bird,
And it seemed quite beyond belief
That any wrecked upon that reef
Could swim ashore and scale the crag
By daylight, let alone by night.

But they who live beside the sea
Know naught's too wonderful to be:
And as I sat and heard
The quiet breathing of the child
Great weariness came over me,

And in a kind of daze
I watched the blaze
With nodding head,
And must have slept, for presently
I found the man was sitting up in bed,
And talking to himself with wide unseeing eyes.
At first I hardly made out what he said:
But soon his voice, so hoarse and wild,
Grew calm, and, straining, I could hear
The broken words that came with many sighs.

" Yes, lad, she's going, but there's naught to fear,
For I can swim and tow you in the belt.
Come, let's join hands together and leap clear...
Ay, son, it's dark and cold...but you have felt
The cold and dark before.....
And you should scorn.....
And we must be near shore.....
For hark, the horn!
Think of your mother and your home and leap...
She thinks of us, lad, waking or asleep...
You would not leave her lonely?
Nay.....then.....go!
Well done, lad!.....Nay! I'm here.....
Ay, son, it's cold, but you're too big to fear.
Now then you're snug: I've got you safe in tow:
The worst is over and we've only
To make for land...we've naught...to do...but steer...
But steer...but steer..."

He paused and sank down in the bed, quite done,
And lay a moment silent, while his son
Still slumbered in the other bed,
And on his quiet face the firelight shone:
Then once again the father raised his head

And rambled on—

“ Say, lad, what cheer?

I thought you'd dropt asleep, but you're all right.

We'll rest a moment...I'm quite out of breath...

It's further than...Nay, son! there's naught to fear...

The land must be quite near—

The horn is loud enough!

Only your father's out of puff:

He's getting fat and lazy, is your dad.

Ay, lad,

It's cold;

But you're too old

To cry for cold.

Now...keep...tight hold,

And we'll be off again.

I've got my breath..."

He sank once more as still as death,

With hands that clutched the counterpane;

But still the boy was sleeping quietly.

And then the father sat up suddenly

And cried—" See! See!

The land! The land!

It's near...I touch it with my hand."

And now " O God!" he moaned.

Small wonder when he saw what lay before—

The black unbroken crags so grim and high

That must have seemed to him to soar

Sheer from the sea's edge to the sky.

But soon he plucked up heart once more:

" We're safe, lad—safe ashore!

A narrow ledge, but land, firm land.

We'll soon be high and dry.

Nay, son, we can't stay here:

The waves would have us back
Or we should perish of the cold.
Come, lad, there's naught to fear
You must be brave and bold.
Perhaps we'll strike a track.
Ay, son, it's steep and black
And slimy to the hold;
But we must climb.....and see! the mist is gone:
The stars are shining clear.....
Think, son, your mother's at the top,
And you'll be up in no time. See that star,
The brightest star that ever shone,
Just think it's she that watches you
And knows that you'll be brave and true.
Come, lad, we may not stop.....
Or else the cold.....
Give me your hand.....
Your foot there now.....just room to stand.
It cannot be so far.....
We'll soon be up.....this work should make us warm.
Thank God it's not a storm,
Or we should scarce.....Your foot here firm.....
Nay, lad! You must not squirm.
Come, be a man: you shall not fall:
I'll hold you tight.
There—now you are my own son after all!
Your mother, lad,
Her star burns bright.....
And we're already half-way up the height.....
Your mother will be glad,
Ay, she'll be glad to hear
Of her brave boy who had no fear.

Your foot.....your hand.....'twas but a bird
You startled out of bed:

'Twould think it queer
To wake up suddenly and see your head;
And when you stirred.....
Nay! steady, lad!
Or you will send your dad.....
Your hand...your foot...We'll rest upon this ledge.....
Why, son, we're at the top! I feel the edge
And grass—soft dewy grass!
Let go one moment and I'll draw you up.....
Now, lad!.....Thank God that's past!
And you are safe at last—
You're safe, you're safe.....and now my precious lass
Will see her son, her little son, again.

I never thought to reach the top to-night.
God! What a height!
Nay, but you must not look: 'twould turn your head:
And we must not stand shivering here.....
And see!—a flashing light.....
It's sweeping towards us, and now you stand bright...
Ah, your poor bleeding hands and feet!
My little son, my sweet!
There's nothing more to fear.
A lighthouse, lad! And we must make for it.
You're tired; I'll carry you a bit.
Nay, son, 'twill warm me up.....
And there will be a fire and bed,
And even perhaps a cup
Of something hot to drink,
And something good to eat.
And think, son, only think—
Your home.....and mother.....once again!"

Once more the weary head
Sank back upon the bed;

And for a while he hardly stirred,
But only muttered now and then
A broken word,
As though to cheer
His son who slept so quietly
At the other side of me.
And then my blood ran cold to hear
A sudden cry of fear:
" My son! My son!
Ah God, he's done!
I thought I'd laid him on the bed.....
I've laid him on white mist instead.....
He's fallen sheer....."

Then I sprang up and cried: " Your son is here!"
And taking up the sleeping boy
I bore him to his father's arms,
And as he nestled to his breast
Kind life came back to those wild eyes
And filled them with deep joy,
And free of all alarms
The son and father lay
Together in sweet rest,
While through the window stole the strange clear
light of day.

24

CRADLE-SONG

FROM groves of spice,
O'er fields of rice,
Athwart the lotus-stream,
I bring for you,
Aglint with dew
A little lovely dream.

Sweet, shut your eyes,
The wild fire-flies
Dance through the fairy *neem*;
From the poppy-hole
For you I stole
A little lovely dream.

Dear eyes, good-night,
In golden light
The stars around you gleam;
On you I press
With soft caress
A little lovely dream.

25

THE CAROL OF THE POOR CHILDREN

WE are the poor children, come out to see the sights
On this day of all days, on this night of nights;
The stars in merry parties are dancing in the sky,
A fine star, a new star, is shining on high!

We are the poor children, our lips are frosty blue,
We cannot sing our carol as well as rich folk do;
Our bellies are so empty we have no singing voice,
But this night of all nights good children must rejoice.

We do rejoice, we do rejoice, as hard as we can try,
A fine star, a new star is shining in the sky!
And while we sing our carol, we think of the delight
The happy kings and shepherds make in Bethlehem
to-night.

Are we naked, mother, and are we starving-poor—
Oh, see what gifts the kings have brought outside
the stable-door;

Are we cold, mother, the ass will give his hay
To make the manger warm and keep the cruel winds
away.

We are the poor children, but not so poor who sing
Our carol without voiceless hearts to greet the
new-born King.

On this night of all nights, when in the frosty sky
A new star, a kind star is shining on high!

26

THE SEND-OFF

Down the close, darkening lanes they sang their way
To the siding-shed,
And lined the train with faces grimly gay.
Their breasts were stuck all white with wreath and
spray

As men's are, dead.

Dull porters watched them, and a casual tramp
Stood staring hard,
Sorry to miss them from the upland camp.
Then, unmoved, signals nodded, and a lamp
Winked to the guard.

So secretly, like wrongs hushed-up, they went.
They were not ours:
We never heard to which front these were sent.
Nor there if they yet mock what women meant
Who gave them flowers.

Shall they return to beatings of great bells
In wild train-loads?

A few, a few, too few for drums and yells,
May creep back, silent, to village wells
Up half-known roads.
